

SALEH DARAT

(Muhammad Sâlih b. `Umar al-Samarânî)

[Indonesia; Jepara ca.1820 - Semarang 1903]

[*Dictionnaire biographique des savants et grandes figures du monde musulman périphérique, du XIXe siècle à nos jours*, Fasc. no 2. Paris: CNRS-EHESS, 1998, p. 25-26]

Saleh was born in Jepara, where his father Umar was a religious scholar. According to local oral tradition, Kyai Umar was one of the `ulama who, together with the more famous Kyai Maja, supported Diponegoro in his uprising against the Dutch. After Diponegoro's defeat, Kyai Umar took his son Saleh to Singapore; from there they went on to Mecca, where Saleh stayed several years studying. He was called back to Java by Kyai Murtadlo (Murtazâ), a companion of his father in the Diponegoro rebellion, who made him his son-in-law.

Kyai Saleh established a pesantren in Darat, a mostly Arab-inhabited neighbourhood of Semarang, where he was to spend the rest of his life. The pesantren was closed after his death, but its *langgar* (a small mosque) still stands in its original form. He had numerous *santri* (students), some of whom became the leading `ulama of the turn of the century. Both the founder of Muhammadiyah, Kyai Dahlan of Yogyakarta, and the charismatic first leader of the Nahdlatul Ulama, Kyai Hasyim Asy'ari, are said to have studied with Saleh Darat. Other influential students include Kyai Mahfudh of Termas and Kyai Idris, the founder of the pesantren of Jamsaren (Solo).

Kyai Saleh was renowned for his anti-Dutch attitude. He taught his students to avoid the Dutch as much as possible and warned against imitating their ways. In his once widely read fiqh work, *Majmû`at al-sharî`at al-kâfiyya li-l-`awâmm*, he declared it unlawful for Muslims to wear European clothes. If a Muslim had to enter a government office, Kyai Saleh declared, he should do so with the left foot first - i.e., as one does when entering a toilet or other impure place. In his written works, Kyai Saleh's anti-Dutch attitudes are of the quietist kind. He was, however, at least once suspected of more activist inclinations. In 1883 the Dutch consul in Jeddah reported rumours that Shaykh Saleh from Semarang attempted to persuade the Ottoman sultan to intervene against the Dutch domination of Java.

Kyai Saleh wrote numerous works, all of them in the north-coast Javanese dialect (in pseudo-Arabic described as *al-lughâ al-jâwiyya al-mrîkiyya*, with the Javanese word for 'here', *mrîki*). His

most favoured branch of learning was ethical mysticism, and three of his books are based on works by Ghazâlî, Ibn `Atâ'illâh and Zayn al-Dîn al-Malîbarî, but he also wrote on various other subjects. His extremely modest way of life reinforced his image as a mystic. Among younger Javanese `ulama he was given the sobriquet of 'little Ghazâlî' *al-Ghazâlî al-saghîr*. In the 1920s and 1930s, his books were found all over Java, and several of them are still in print. The most important of his writings are:

1. *Minhâj al-adhkiyâ' fî sharh ma`rifat al-adhkiyâ'*, a Javanese translation of a Sufi work by Zayn al-Dîn al-Malîbarî.
2. A Javanese translation of Ibn `Atâ'illâh's *Al-hikam*.
3. *Munji`ât* (excerpts from Ghazâlî's *Ihyâ*).
4. *Sabîl al-`abâd*, a translation of and commentary on a well-known text on doctrine, Ibrâhîm al-Luqânî's *Jawharat al-tawhîd*.
5. *Majmu`at al-shar`iyya al-kâfiyat li-l-`awam*, a general *fiqh* text.
6. *Al-murshid al-wajîz fî `ilm al-qur`ân al-`azîz*, on the Qur`ân.
7. *Latâ'if al-tahâra*, on the merits of prayer and fasting.
8. *Manâsik al-hajj wa-l-`umra*, on the Meccan pilgrimage.

Kyai Saleh died on 28 Ramadan 1321/18 December 1903. There is a commemorative ceremony (Ar. *hawl*, Jav. *khaul*) for him each year on the 5th of Shawwâl.

Bibliography:

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